

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

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SUBJ: ROMANIAN GOVERNMENT DECREE ON ENERGY

REF: BUCHAREST 4173

1. FOLLOWING RECENT PARTY CC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE POLICY DECISION CONCERNING ROMANIA'S ENERGY SITUATION (REFTEL), COUNCIL OF STATE ON NOVEMBER 17 ADOPTED IMPLEMENTING DECREE AFFECTING DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION OF ENERGY RESOURCES. AS EXPECTED, DECREE LAID DOWN LONG-TERM PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION, AND ADOPTED OTHER PRACTICAL MEASURES IMMEDIATELY AFFECTING CURRENT DOMESTIC ENERGY CONSUMPTION.

2. IN LONG-TERM SENSE, DECREE CALLS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF DOMESTIC ENERGY RESOURCES THROUGH RESEARCH AND EXPLORATION, AND FORESEES STEPS TO REDUCE INDUSTRIAL CONSUMPTION OF FUELS AND ENERGY. RESEARCH WILL INCLUDE NEW METHODS FOR USE OF BITUMINOUS SHALE, MORE EFFICIENT USE OF HYDROCARBON FUELS AND INCREASED UTILIZATION OF HYDROELECTRIC POTENTIAL, WHILE EXPLORATION WILL COVER SUCH AREAS AS SEARCH FOR OFFSHORE OIL DEPOSITS AND OPENING OF NEW LIGNITE MINES.

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3. TWO ANNEXES CONTAIN SERIES OF ARTICLES WHICH RATION AND REGULATE

CURRENT CONSUMPTION OF GASOLINE, FUEL OIL AND ELECTRICITY. PRIVATE PASSENGER CARS FOR EXAMPLE, ARE LIMITED TO 40 LITERS PER MONTH DURING WINTER MONTHS AND 60 LITERS PER MONTH DURING SUMMER MONTHS. MINISTRY AUTOMOBILES AND THOSE BELONGING TO INDUSTRIAL CENTRALS HAVE SOMEWHAT LARGER RATION (A VERY FEW, INCLUDING FIRE FIGHTING VEHICLES, AMBULANCES AND SECURITY ORGANS, ARE EXEMPT ENTIRELY). SPEED LIMITS BOTH WITHIN CITY LIMITS AND HIGHWAYS HAVE BEEN REDUCED, AND DISTANCE LIMITS PLACED ON CERTAIN CATEGORIES OF OFFICIAL VEHICLES.

FUEL OIL CONSUMPTION IS REGULATED BY LIMITING TEMPERATURES TO BETWEEN 16 DEGREES AND 18 DEGREES CENTIGRADE IN INDUSTRIAL PLANTS AND 20 DEGREES CENTIGRADE IN APARTMENTS. EXCEPTIONS ARE MADE FOR HOSPITALS AND SCHOOLS. ELECTRICITY USE WILL BE CUT BY REDUCING LIGHTING IN SHOPS, OFFICES AND PUBLIC PLACES BY UP TO 50 PERCENT, AND ALMOST COMPLETELY ON EXPRESS HIGHWAYS.

COMMENT: IN ADDITION TO CONSIDERATIONS OUTLINED IN REFTTEL, ADOPTION OF SUCH STRINGENT DOMESTIC REGULATIONS CARRIES IMPLICATIONS FOR ROMANIA'S PRIORITIES IN FUEL AND ENERGY FIELD. ROMANIA'S PRODUCTION CAPACITY FOR PETROLEUM PRODUCTS IN PARTICULAR COULD SUPPLY MOST OF ITS DOMESTIC REQUIREMENTS WITHOUT SUCH RIGID CONTROL MEASURES IF IT CHOSE TO DO SO. RECENT ACTIONS INDICATE, HOWEVER, THAT GOR MAY BE USING PRESENT ENERGY CRISIS ATMOSPHERE TO TIGHTEN DOMESTIC CONSUMER USE IN ORDER (1) TO GIVE INCREASED EMPHASIS TO EXPORTS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CURRENT HIGH WORLD DEMAND AND PRICES, AND (2) TO ASSURE SUPPLIES FOR INTERNAL INDUSTRIAL USE TO MEET ITS AMBITIOUS GROWTH PLANS. THIS, INCIDENTALLY, IS ONLY ANOTHER IN A SERIES OF STEPS TAKEN RECENTLY WHEREIN BURDEN FALLS ESPECIALLY ON MIDDLE-LEVEL CONSUMER--INCREASE IN MEAT PRICES, LAW REQUIRING PURCHASE OF APARTMENT DWELLINGS, BUREAUCRATIC REORGANIZATION CAUSING DEMOTIONS AND LOSS OF PAY FOR MANY AND SENSE OF DECREASED JOB SECURITY FOR ALL, GASOLINE PRICE INCREASES, AND NOW GASOLINE RATIONING AND REGULATION OF FUEL AND ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION. RESULT IS MUCH GRUMBLING AMONG POPULATION, ESPECIALLY ITS MIDDLE CLASS, ALTHOUGH WITH AIR OF RESIGNATION RATHER THAN INDIGNATION--THERE ARE NO SIGNS THAT KIND OF DISTURBANCES THAT LED IN POLAND TO FALL OF GOMULKA WILL OCCUR HERE.

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